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REVIEW

OF

EXTRACTS OF MINUTES

AND OTHER PAPERS,

PUBLISHED BY A MEETING HELD IN ELEVENTH-STREET,
PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST, 1833.

BY THE REV. DAVID SCOTT.

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1833.

REVIEW.

THE meeting, the minutes and other papers of which we propose to review, styles itself, on the title-page of its printed proceedings, "The General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America." This is a misnomer. And the error may be corrected by inserting before the word Reformed, the monosyllable Anti. And then it will read, "Proceedings of the General Synod of the *Anti-Reformed* Presbyterian Church in North America." This correction is the more necessary, as the style "Reformed Presbyterian Church" is already pre-engaged to designate a body of Christians long known in America, and whose views on various subjects are materially different from those whose proceedings we are now about to review. As a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we are unwilling that a body of men, who hold few of her distinctive principles, should be embraced in the same common name. It is true these men were *once* of us. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." But in going out, they say, with the "seven women" who took "hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by *thy name, to take away our reproach.*"

This pamphlet, though it *professes* to be minutes of a Synod, is a thing made up of "shreds and patches." Instead of being a history of their proceedings, it is in fact a last effort in behalf of a dying cause. Under the name of an appendix, the pamphlet contains the arguings and the dogmatisms, the false glosses and the misrepresentations, of Presbyters and laymen, single-handed and in combined phalanx! And, all this is employed to reproach the character of men, who stood in the gap in the day of Zion's trouble, and who humbly endeavoured to protect her from the spoiling hand of false friends. The same reproaches are presented in a variety of shapes, and from a variety of sources, in the shape of reports,

memorials, petitions and complaints. In them all, however, the burden of their song is the same—the hated “*pro re nata.*” They harmonize, too, most wondrously in their expression of feeling; a deep rankling and vindictive disposition pervades the whole. At the sacrifice of charity, truth, and even common decency of language, they impeach the motives, misrepresent the conduct, and abuse the character of men, who, to say the least, are better than themselves. But when the excitement, which at present exists, shall have passed away, it is obvious where this abuse will fall—not on those who are thus traduced, but on the heads of those who, to screen themselves from merited discipline, have become recreant to the courts of Christ; and have been guilty of distracting and dividing the house of God.

In reviewing the pamphlet before us, it is not necessary to give a history of the events which transpired previous to the meeting in Eleventh-street, Philadelphia. A knowledge of these, however, is requisite, to be able to perceive the evil tendency of the pamphlet.

The Rev. S. W. Crawford had moderated in the General Synod of 1831. In the month of April last, Mr. Crawford and others of his brethren were, because of certain scandals charged against them, suspended from the exercise of their office as ministers, by the provincial Synod of which they were members. They were thus legally disqualified from performing any ministerial function, while the act of suspension remained. It has become fashionable to deny the validity of courts when their decisions are disliked, or when they are found to be inconvenient. In the present case, not even this pretence can be offered for refusing obedience to the act of suspension by the Eastern Sub-Synod. They had all recognised the authority of that court, by sitting as members of it for part of two days; and it was only when they perceived that they were a minority, and therefore could not carry their measures; and that the discipline of the church would be faithfully applied to them, that they schismatically withdrew themselves from the court. By this court, the legality of which had been acknowledged by Mr. Crawford himself, he was suspended from the exercise of his office; this disqualified him from acting as Moderator of General Synod. The other individuals suspended along with Mr. Crawford, maintained that, although under suspension, he had a right to moderate in the General Synod. The ground upon which this extraordinary procedure was attempted to be vindicated, was, that the act of suspension by the Sub-Synod was not, and could not, be known to General Sy-

nod, till after the latter should have been constituted. The fallacy of this is too great to require much to expose it. Suppose the sin charged on Mr. Crawford had been, not dereliction of principle, but some more gross scandal—say an aggravated case of drunkenness, or perhaps adultery ;—suppose he had been suspended from the exercise of his office for this sin ;—would it ever have been plead that he was not incapacitated from acting as Moderator of the General Synod ? or that the Synod could not know it till it had come up in the report of the Sub-Synod, after the constitution of the former ? In such a case there would have been no difficulty. An attempt to arrogate the right of moderating in a court, whilst so circumstanced, would have brought down upon any man the further censures of the church. Difference in degree of sin, makes no difference in the validity of church authority. If a court has a power to inflict censure, all who are under it are bound to acknowledge the infliction of the censure, whether in greater or lesser scandals. Nor does it alter the case in the least, that Mr. Crawford and his friends did not consider the things for which they were libelled and suspended, sinful. *They* were not the proper judges, whether the things libelled were, or were not, sinful. They were declared to be sinful by a court to which they owed obedience ; and according to the order of the Presbyterian Church, were binding on them, till they were removed by a superior tribunal. While we believe that there cannot be a doubt in the mind of any one, who loves the peace and order of the house of God, of the validity of the act by which Mr. Crawford and others were suspended, and of course were disqualified for performing any official act—while, we say, we believe so, let us, for the sake of placing the subject in the most favourable light for Mr. Crawford and the other suspended parties, admit that the sentence was unjust and oppressive ; still, without destroying Presbyterian principles of government, it could not be set at nought by any act of the parties themselves. It could not be set aside by any authority but that of a superior court. Till this be done, the act remains in force. Were this not the case, courts of appeal would be useless. This obvious principle must approve itself, in the judgment of every man who acknowledges Presbyterian church government. If, in the case of an unjust sentence, which may be reversed by a superior court, the party is bound, because, although the sentence may be unjust, the court who pronounced it is a legal court,—how much more is he bound to submit, when the sentence, as in the present instance, is just and equitable ? The obligation

to recognise the decisions of a court as binding in law, till they be reversed, rests equally on all who are under the authority of the court: even the superior court itself is bound to honour it, till it has reviewed the decision.* It is evident then, that Mr. Crawford, and the other suspended ministers of the Eastern Sub-Synod, were legally bound to submit to the decision till it had been reviewed by General Synod. It is evident, also, that General Synod might be made acquainted with the decision before it was formally constituted; and that they were bound to honour it, as the act of a lawfully constituted inferior court. The delegates who were about to constitute themselves into the General Synod, were informed, in the only possible way in which information could be given, of the act of the Sub-Synod, by which several of its members were suspended from the exercise of the ministerial office; the clerk of the Eastern Sub-Synod gave notice officially to the clerk of the General Synod, the only officer of that court in regular standing. At the time and in the place appointed by adjournment of the former session of General Synod, the delegates from Presbyteries met; but the pulpit was occupied by Mr. Crawford, supported on the one hand by Dr. Wylie, and on the other by Messrs. Kell and Hugh McMillan. Mr. Crawford rose to begin worship; the clerk of the subordinate Synod, as instructed, read a notice, stating that, by an act of this court, the Moderator, Mr. Crawford, was incapacitated from acting, being suspended from the exercise of his office. Mr. Roney, who had been appointed Mr. Crawford's alternate at the Session of 1831, requested the delegates to retire with him to the Church in Cherry-street, where the Synodical Sermon would be preached, and General Synod constituted.† This had become indispensably necessary: First, because the pulpit was occupied by Mr. Crawford and his friends, to one of whom it belonged, and who was himself involved in the same act of

* We do not mean to say that, when gross injustice is done, and superior courts unjustly confirm the deed, that a man is bound in *conscience* to submit and acknowledge the *justice* of the sentence. It has happened that a man has found himself obliged, when justice was refused by the highest court of appeal, to decline its authority. But, although it may be unjust, yet, being the deed of a competent authority, it is binding in law till it is reversed by a court of appeal.

† In Cherry-street, the delegates met immediately on their leaving Eleventh-street Church; the sermon was preached and Synod constituted by the Rev. Moses Roney, the alternate. For the proceedings of General Synod, we refer to the published minutes of that court. The simple and business-like character of these, form a striking contrast to the heterogeneous mass of falsehood and malice of those we are now reviewing!

suspension. It was evident from this, as well as other declarations repeatedly made by members of the Eleventh-street congregation, that the alternate of Mr. Crawford would not be permitted to enter the pulpit. Secondly, because the delegates were perfectly aware that civil power would be employed to prevent them from remonstrating against the disorderly course which had been adopted by the suspended brethren. In this they were not mistaken; a number of constables were provided and held in readiness in an adjoining house, to pounce upon the luckless delegates if they should attempt to urge what good order demanded, that Mr. Crawford, being suspended, should not act as Moderator of General Synod. In an anonymous letter, published on the day following the constitution of General Synod, *pretending* to have been written by a stranger, though evidently by one of themselves, an attempt is made to persuade the world that the whole contention was merely a dispute on a point of order. This weak and insidious attempt cannot impose upon any one who is correctly informed as to the circumstances of the case; nor did the writer of the letter himself believe it.* A point of order, it is true, was involved; one of too much moment to be compromised by a court having any regard to its character for integrity. But that point of order grew out of the fact, that discipline had been administered because of dereliction of principle. And the opposition made to the Synod on the point of order, was a mere pretence to evade the discipline of the church, and break down her distinctive principles, for violating of which, discipline had been applied. The point of order was as simple and easy of solution, as any that ever came before a court. In consequence of irregularity of conduct, a church officer was incapacitated by suspension from the exercise of his office; the alternate appointed by Synod was then the only person legally qualified to perform the duties of his office. The whole use and design of an alternate is a provision for contingencies that may arise during the interval, from one meeting of Synod till another, whether the contingency may arise from the exercise of discipline, as in the present case, or from inability, absence or death.

Having read the preceding sketch, our readers will be able to form an opinion of the exceedingly improper conduct of Mr. Crawford and his supporters, in obtruding themselves on Synod, and attempting to force him on Synod as Moderator, although he and the most forward of them were

* As may be seen from a very cursory perusal of the letter referred to.

under suspension; and all of them taken together formed only a *small minority*. Our readers may be surprised when they are told, that this small minority, most of whom were under censure, setting the authority of the church at defiance, did pretend to constitute a court of Christ! But such is the fact, as we are informed by the pamphlet which we are now reviewing, and from which we make the following quotation. "The regularly certified members were the following:—

Ministers.

"Rev. Dr. Wylie,
S. W. Crawford,
William Wilson,
James W. Stewart,
John Kell,
Samuel Wylie,
*James Faris,
*Ebenezer Cooper,
Dr. McMaster,
John McMaster,
A. S. McMaster,
Hugh McMillan,
Dr. Black,
Jonathan Gill,
Robert McKee,
†Thomas C. Guthrie,
†Andrew W. Black."

Ruling Elders.

Henry Sterling,
John McIntyre,
Andrew Gifford,
Thomas McAdam,
William C. Beattie,
James W. Hogue,
*James Blair,
*James McClurkin,
*William Wyatt,
James McBean,
William Cunningham,
Robert Willson,
John Monteath,
Daniel McMillan,
*James Gormly,
†James McVickar,
†Thomas Smith."

According to this catalogue, the anti-reformed Presbyterian meeting of Eleventh-street, consisted of 34 members; 17 ministers, and as many ruling elders. If any thing in the management of the anti-Presbyterians or newlight men, could surprise those who are acquainted with their doings, our readers would be surprised when they were informed that of those specified in the above catalogue, 6 were not present, namely, such as are marked with a star (*) 7 were not appointed by their presbyteries, namely, Messrs. John McIntyre, Andrew Gifford, W. C. Beattie, and the four marked with a dagger (†) 5 were suspended; 2 were under process; 1 was ordained by persons under suspension; 2 were an excess above what the existing law allows from one congregation; amounting in all to 23 irregularly appointed, or not present. Thus reducing the number to 11, and this number, small as it is, might be further reduced, because of excess of representation. Considering the gross irregularities, of various

kinds, which the newlights have done, we do not wonder much that they should have wished to swell their catalogue by appointing delegates, who were not in regular standing; by appointing some who ought not to be appointed; by an improper ratio of representation; or by admitting some who were not delegated by the presbyteries to which they belonged. But, that they should have enumerated as "regularly certified members," the names of men, who were not present, was more than we expected from even newlightism itself. How could men be members of a delegated court, who never took their seats in it; and who were not, not even one of them, within many hundred miles of the place of meeting? Yet, six individuals are marked as "regularly certified members," some of whom were a thousand miles off. Who warranted the meeting in Eleventh-street, to use the names of men who were not present to speak and act for themselves? How was it known that these men, had they been present, would have countenanced the meeting in Eleventh-street? These are questions, that would baffle even "the witch of Endor," were she living, to answer satisfactorily. Why, make up a nominal catalogue of names, of men who were not there, or who ought not, and could not, legally be there, even though the meeting had been regularly constituted? An object was to be gained by eking out the number of delegates supposed to have left the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and gone over to newlightism. The brethren who have left us were anxious to be thought, if not a majority of Synod, as at least approaching it. Therefore they put down many names that ought not to be there, and six who were not present, although some of these are understood by such as know them to be men of different principles indeed, from those of the packed conclave that meet in Eleventh-street, Philadelphia.

Respecting these under suspension, we make only one remark more. Whatever these erring brethren may think of the justice of the sentence by which they were suspended, they were bound to submit to it, till it came under the revision of a superior court. For the satisfactory reason, it was the act of a court having jurisdiction in the case—of a court, the legality of which, they themselves had recognized—of a court, in which they had sat and acted as members during the first, and the greater part of the second of its sessions. It is not possible that unprejudiced men can be so far deceived as to be persuaded, that the Eleventh-street meeting was a regular court of Christ.

In page 7, a number of papers are said to have been "re-

ceived from the committee of bills." Some of these we shall have occasion to examine in a subsequent part of our review; in this, however, we think it but an act of justice to expose the evident design and tendency of this parade of papers. Such as are not familiar with this matter, would suppose that these papers are from so many congregations bearing their respective names.

"No. 1." is "a memorial," not "from the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation, in Chamber-street, New-York," but from a party who were formerly in connexion with that congregation, and who are now acting independently of the presbytery to which they belong. "2. A memorial from the congregation, in Sixth-street, New-York, signed by 51 individuals," &c. The impression made by reading this, is that 51 members of that congregation, were tired of their principles and ecclesiastical standing, and were now seeking deliverance in newlightism. The truth is, that only a very few of Sixth-street congregation, have made any manifestation of this kind.* It must be admitted that these are very active and zealous; and would if they had it in their power, put an end to the organization of that congregation. But they have utterly failed. This last effort of getting up a petition, will not, and cannot have the desired effect. It was represented as a petition to be sent to Synod, to heal, if it were possible, the distractions of the church. But instead of being presented to Synod, it is laid on the table of the meeting in Eleventh-street. After Synod, when this was discovered, the greater number of those who had been misled by the ambiguous transaction came forward and declared their adherence to the congregation of Sixth-street.

"3. A memorial from Coldenham," &c. It might be thought by those who were not acquainted with the case, (and doubtless this was the effect meant to be produced) that it was a memorial from the congregation of Coldenham. But far from it. Newlights in Coldenham are "like angel visits, few and far between." The congregation is firmly attached to the principles and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

"4. A memorial from Paterson," &c. The congregation of Paterson, is in a state of disorganization, the memorial therefore can only express the opinions and wishes of a very few individuals.

"5. A memorial from Argyle," &c. This is liable to the same objections with the preceding. It is from only a *part*

* The number is somewhere from 15 to 20.

of Argyle congregation, and that part which was tired of the principles of the church ; and some of them too, under censure, because of this. To the misrepresentation respecting "new terms of communion and discipline," we shall subsequently advert.

"6. A memorial and petition of William Patterson, of White Lake." The slanderous character of this paper shall be shown, when we come to the appendix, where it is given in full.

"7. A petition from individuals in Bethel, Illinois," &c. Why is this petition not given to the public, as well as the many others that are given ? It contained an able argument against the conduct and principles of the men who constituted the meeting in Eleventh-street; and reproached them to their faces for dereliction of principle. But indeed it never was designed for the meeting to which by accident it went. It was designed for general Synod. And when the brethren of Bethel, understood after it was sent off, where it was likely to be carried, they transmitted a duplicate copy to Synod. It is printed along with the minutes of General Synod, and will repay the trouble of a careful perusal.

"8. A petition from Hephzibah, Lincoln County, Tennessee." If our readers imagine that this petition is from a congregation, their mistake may be corrected by turning over to the appendix, and they will find it subscribed by three names !!!

The appendix contains first, "A proposed plan of harmony." The tendency of this "plan of harmony" is to impose on the credulity of such as are not familiar with the present state of things in the church. It is too late to express anxiety respecting unity and harmony, when an incurable wound has been given to the peace of the church ; and that too by the very men who would *now* (if it were possible) make the world believe that they have been seeking these objects all along. Their whole course of policy for years past has been the very opposite : they have sowed the seeds of disunion ; and they have distracted the church by making innovations in her principles and practice. They are now reaping the bitter fruits of their unholy labour. It ill becomes them, then, now to turn round on the faithful members of the church, who have hitherto endeavoured to stay their corrupting influence, and recklessly charge them with disturbing the peace of the house of God. If, they conscientiously thought, that the Reformed Presbyterian Church was in error, in either principle or practice, why did they remain in her communion ? Why, did they not quietly

withdraw to some other, where they might find men of kindred views and practices with themselves? Although, we have no apology to offer for the man who drops the testimony of the church, yet, his fault dwindles into insignificance when compared with the conduct of those, who, while they fall away in sentiment remain in the bosom of the church to distract and divide her—to mar the peace, and spiritual edification of the members of the body of Christ. Where these things are known, and the love of truth predominates, the “proposed plan of harmony” will be treated as it ought—with neglect. Even, the writer must have penned it, under the overwhelming conviction, that he was urging an impracticability;—that, no man, who had any regard to consistency of conduct—love to the truth of God—or a desire to maintain inviolably the discipline of God’s house, could consent to such a proposal. Far less, that the General Synod should compromise her testimony—unnerv the hand of discipline—or in one word, be guilty of ecclesiastical suicide?

We wish our readers distinctly to keep before them, what on deliberate conviction we are persuaded, was the design of the “plan of harmony.” The design, was not to unite the friends of truth, on the basis of truth; but to distract them, and keep them from acting unitedly against the innovations of newlightism, and the influence of newlight men. “Divide, and command” is the principle of the men, and the bearing of their “proposed plan of harmony.”

The first item of the “plan of harmony,” “Let the New-York pro re nata of November 21, 1832, be declared null and void,” is preposterous, and could not be acceded to, without carrying away with “one fell swoop” the foundations of presbyterial order. Men who had subjected themselves to censure, and upon whom censure was laid, in conformity to the well known laws and usages of the church, cannot reasonably expect that discipline is to be dispensed with, and an unrighteous act of revision be exercised by General Synod, over the decision of one of its subordinate courts! The “proposed plan of harmony” equals in absurdity and folly the conduct of a criminal, who, after receiving sentence, might declare that he was dissatisfied with the court that had found him guilty, and insist that he could not be reconciled till it was “declared null and void.” The felon, with a halter round his neck, is but an incompetent judge of right and wrong in his own case! Seldom does he approve of the sentence which condemns him; and, in all cases if he had it in his power he would declare it “null and void.” That, transgressors of law, do not like its application to themselves,

is no great matter of wonder, considering the perversity of human nature; but it is something *novel*, in the history of ecclesiastical proceedings, that the acts of a lawfully constituted court should be "declared null and void" at the request of offenders, and for the expressed purpose of screening them from discipline! Yet, such is the object of the "proposed plan of harmony," which we think would have been, more appropriately styled, "an anti-discipline plan of distraction."

On examination of "document No. 2." entitled "a brief reference to previous events" it will be perceived, that its writers while they wish to be *considered* Covenanters, differ from them on other grounds than the *application* of principle—that in fact they dispute the principle itself. They slyly insinuate the charge of ignorance against the ministers who first built up the church in this country. "These worthy men were better acquainted with the British constitution at the middle of the seventeenth century, which they had been taught to admire and to approve of, and with that of England, still existing, of which they decidedly disapproved, than with the recent civil institutions of our own country." What is meant by "the British constitution of the middle of the seventeenth century," we do not know—and we are perfectly sure, that the writers of this do not know themselves what is meant by it. "The British constitution of the middle of the seventeenth century!" Why, they might as well talk of the "United States constitution of the middle of the seventeenth century," for the former had no more existence than the latter in that period. There was the constitution of England, and the constitution of Scotland; but in the middle of the seventeenth century, the British constitution was *not*. It had no existence till the eighteenth century. This however is but a little matter with the authors of the "proposed plan of harmony;" accurate and extensive knowledge of history, and an honest use of it, in controversy, do not fall within the circle of their acquirements. We would like much to be informed *where* the fathers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in this country "had been taught to admire and approve of," "the British constitution of the middle of the seventeenth century." Whatever was meant to be conveyed by this unmeaning statement, it is evident, that the general drift of the whole, was to impeach the capacity of those who were engaged in organizing the Reformed Presbyterian Church in this country. Connected with this, there is another statement made, which is not historically true. "Against the institutions of the country there was no pub-

lic authorized testimony.”* Without, waiting further to expose the misstatements contained in this part of document No. 2. we proceed to review the account given of the pro re nata meeting of the Sub-synod of November 21, 1832, only observing that definite charges *were* brought in the Sub-synod of April 1832, against those who were afterwards libelled in the pro re nata meeting of November 21, 1832; not, it is true, in the form of libel, but in the form of statement; but the brethren *then* found it convenient to deny the charges. And one of them (Dr. Wylie) expressed himself with great vehemence when the opinions and fears of some members were intimated on this subject. Declaring that he held no new opinion on the subjects of discussion—that he differed with his brethren not as to principle, but only in the application of principle.

If the writers of this document do not feel compunction because of the remarks which they have made respecting the northern presbytery, it can only be because they are not alive to a sense of shame! But, as neither this, nor the unjust attack made on the members of the pro re nata of Nov. 21, 1832, is likely to injure them, in the opinion of such as know them, or are acquainted with the transactions referred to, we proceed to the account which is given of the pro re nata itself.

In this part of the document, instead of referring to the established laws and usages of the church which regulate extraordinary meetings of her courts, they lay down arbitrary principles of their own, which of course can have no weight with such as feel themselves bound by specified and certain laws and usages of the church. Proceeding to apply their arbitrary rules they remark. “There did not exist a single condition in this case demanding a call of the pro re nata. Nothing unforeseen had arisen.” It matters nothing whether the facts charged were foreseen or not. They had not transpired; and the laws of the Reformed Presbyterian Church do not admit of trying a man for a sin which he has not yet committed, but, which it is *foreseen* he will commit. Subsequently to the meeting of the Eastern Sub-synod of April 1832, certain things were published which that court had rejected and declared to be unfit to be published to the Christian people under their charge. And, to these, other slanderous things were added.

* On this subject see the historical part of the testimony itself, where this is found. Edition of 1807. See also, in vindication of this, “An exposure of the Brief Inquiry” by the writer of this review.

“2. The Synod did not meet.” This objection is pretended to be borne out, by the statement that a majority of ministerial members did not appear. The fact is, out of twenty ministers ten appeared and took their seats; of the others, one was under charge before his own presbytery; thus the number of ministers qualified to act was only nineteen, of these a majority attended and took their seats as members of the *pro re nata* meeting of Synod.

Let it be remembered that it is not necessary, to give validity to a church court, that a majority be present. The law requiring a majority, if ever it were acted upon, has long since become obsolete. Certain it is, that, there is not a church court from the highest to the lowest (nor any legislative assembly) that acknowledges such a regulation. When a Session, Presbytery, or Synod meets by a proper call or appointment, in no instance do the members feel themselves bound to dismiss without doing business, because the majority may choose to neglect their duty. A comparatively small number may according to constant practice constitute a quorum—or in other words may legally proceed to do business.

The weakness of the objection will be further seen when it is considered that the absentees, with the exception of the Rev. Dr. McLeod, the Rev. Messrs. John Gibson and John Fisher, were the persons whose irregularity made it necessary to call Synod.* It is not wonderful that men seeing the discipline of the church about to be applied to them, would endeavour to avoid it. But, admit the principle, and then in no case, however disorderly members may act, would it be possible to bring them to trial, if they were sufficiently numerous to form a combination against the authority of the church.

Not only a majority, but nearly all the members of Synod not implicated in the case on which order was to be taken, assembled.†

* Mr. John Gibson in his letter to Synod, acknowledged that he was of the same opinion with Dr. Wylie, and might be condemned along with him, thus making himself a party. Mr. Fisher, though not present, has since approved of what was done.

† The writer of this Review receives a full share of the abuse heaped upon the members of the *pro re nata* meeting of Synod. To be reproached for preaching the gospel in “different countries” is a reproach which he bears in common with the Apostle Paul and others of the best men who have ever lived; and in their company is willing to bear it. But, when it is said that “He has shown himself sufficiently zealous in the very laudable work of suspending his brethren, and of endeavouring to separate them from the congregations where they labour” he flings back the base charge on the *heartless* men who could condescend to write such a paragraph—who reckless of the infamy, of deliberately and without cause violating the ninth commandment, could thus bear “false witness” against a *brother*.

“ 3. The publication of the original draft of the address could not in itself be criminal.” We humbly suggest that it is not for the *accused* to judge whether the thing charged be, or be not, criminal. This is determined by the law; and the law is interpreted, not by the accused, but by the court before which the case is tried. If a criminal thinks himself aggrieved, he may have recourse to an appeal; but, he cannot set aside the competency of the court on the ground that *he thinks* the conduct charged “ not criminal.”

“ 4. One indispensable condition of a legitimate *pro re nata*, is that the business be distinctly specified in the call, and another condition is, that no other business shall be transacted, but that which is specified.” It so happens, that both of these, which we admit to be indispensable conditions of a *pro re nata* meeting of a court, were complied with, as may be seen, by referring to the citation and the minutes of Synod. In the citation the business was specified; and no other, than what *was* specified was transacted. It does not invalidate the meeting of Synod, that the citation includes and “ such other business as may come before the court.” This general specification is vindicated on two grounds, first the jurisdiction of a *pro re nata* meeting extends not only to the points specified, but, to whatever may grow necessarily out of these in the course of discussion.* Secondly, there is no law in existence which would invalidate a *pro re nata* meeting, because the citation contained more than might be discussed. The law which regulates this, requires that the business to come before court be specified; and that nothing more be discussed than what is specified. But the law neither says, nor implies, that if the citation contains more than is discussed that the meeting is therefore “ null and void.”

That the *pro re nata* meeting of the Eastern Sub-synod was in perfect correspondence with the law which regulates such meetings, will be best understood by referring to the law itself. “ The Moderator may likewise upon any extraordinary emergency by his circular letters, convene presbyteries and Synods before their ordinary time of meeting. So may the Moderator of the last General Assembly, only they would be sure to have sufficient ground, and so cautious, as to have a multitude of counsellors to warrant and support their adventure.”

* This was the case with the suspension of the Rev. J. N. McLeod, who was suspended for contempt of court. It is bitterly complained of by his friends that he was not tried by libel. Who ever knew of a person being libelled and formally tried for contempt? Every court has the power of summarily punishing contempt of its authority. In this case the power was justly and properly exercised.

Stewart's Collections, Book I. Title 9th. "The General Assembly, December 20th, 1638, declares that by divine, ecclesiastical and civil warrant, the assembly of this national church hath power and liberty to assemble and convene in her yearly general assemblies, and oftener *pro re nata*, as occasion and necessity shall require." Stewart's Col. Book I. Title 15. "A *pro re nata* meeting of Presbytery is called by the Moderator either on his own motion, when any thing has occurred which appears to him to require the assembling of the brethren before the time of the ordinary meeting; or on application made to him by some of the members of presbytery, with a statement of the grounds on which the application is made. He may refuse to grant it, but the responsibility of doing so rests upon him, and at the first ordinary meeting the whole of the circumstances will be brought before the presbytery. When a *pro re nata* meeting is called, letters of intimation, both of the day of meeting and of the subject to be discussed, are written to every member. The Moderator states at the meeting the circumstances which led him to call it; and the presbytery in the first place, pronounces its judgment upon his conduct in doing so. No other business but that for which the meeting was called can be transacted at it." "Meetings of Synod *pro re nata* are occasionally, but very rarely held." Judicatory Practice of the Church of Scotland, pp. 74, 80. "In cases of emergency, the Moderator *may*, at the respectful written request of at least two members, call a *pro re nata* meeting; authorizing in writing the clerk to send a written requisition to all the members, and to parties concerned, which written requisition shall specify the time, place and occasion of the meeting. In this case the members are required to attend, and must confine themselves to the particular business." Overture of "A Book of Ecclesiastical Government and Discipline," of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, p. 21.

From these extracts it will be perceived, that the sole right of calling a *pro re nata* meeting is confided in the Moderator by the laws of the presbyterian church; members are bound to meet at his call, and may be censured if they do not. But it belongs to the court when met to judge whether there were sufficient reason for the call—to proceed and do business, or to retire without doing business; but till the members actually meet, and judge by what the Moderator may lay before them, they have no power. Trying, by the acknowledged laws of the church, the *pro re nata* meeting of November 21, 1832, we find it possesses every attribute of a lawful court.

1. It was called by citation of the Moderator, the Rev. William Gibson, who alone had power to call it.

2. The Moderator's citation specified the business, for which the members were to meet.

3. The members of Synod when met declared the causes assigned by the Moderator to be satisfactory. They took order in the things specified. And

4. No other business but that specified in the citation was transacted.

On such a foundation, the validity of the *pro re nata* meeting of Nov. 21, stands—a foundation, that is unassailable, on either the principles of law or common sense. It is a question, that is not to be settled by arbitrary opinion, or by mere assertion and misstatement, as we find it treated in the document under review; but by the laws of the church, which regulate such meetings. Every thing else is apart from the question of the validity of the *pro re nata* meeting of Synod.

In this place, we beg leave to state, that what is asserted in page 13th. of the appendix, namely “ten ministers were present, one of them, the eldest, expressed his convictions previously to, and at the meeting, of its illegality” is a fabrication. Strange indeed that any man should express convictions of the illegality of a court and voluntarily preside in it, at the same time! And a meeting of the court too which *he himself* had called by citing its members! The character, and former services of this aged servant of Jesus Christ, ought to have shielded him from such an indecent insinuation.

The third part of Document 2, is styled “grave matter of complaint,” were we to judge of the complaint from the number of things which it contains, we must grant that is a “grave matter of complaint” indeed.

The complaints, are throughout, groundless; they are founded, in either a misrepresentation of facts, or in the use of words and expressions in a sense different from their ordinary acceptation. It is assumed by the writers of this document that the *pro re nata* meeting of Synod was invalid. But, its validity has been proved; its character is unimpeachable. Every complaint founded on a mistake so radical, is, in its own nature unjust, and elaims not a hearing in the righteous administration of law.

It assumes that the application of discipline where it has been *merited* is disorderly and cruel.

It also assumes that the finding of a libel containing specific charges is slanderous.

If, all these assumptions were admitted, then indeed we

acknowledge there would be "grave matter of complaint;" but as it is, they are unfounded. Chastisement for faults is not agreeable to flesh and blood; unsanctified nature resists it. But, this opposition of the flesh to the discipline of God's house is not to be admitted as satisfactory ground of despising it; nor as a reason why the administrators of discipline should be calumniated when they do their duty. There is nothing however, more common. The hardened wretches who people the cells of penitentiaries and prisons are loud enough in a similar kind of "complaint." They too, complain of the severity of the law which restrains them; but who ever thinks of admitting their opinion as testimony against the courts that may have found them guilty.

When church discipline has not the effect of humbling—when it goads on to expressions and acts of enmity towards those who have applied it, there is then evidence that sin is not *felt* to be such an evil as it is, and that pride and passion predominate. For their own sake, for the sake of Zion's peace, and for the sake of the glory of God, we wish that our offending brethren had acted and written very differently from what they have done. In an evil hour, they were tempted to publish the original draft of the pastoral address; and in a still more evil hour they resolved to brave the authority of Synod, because of this; and thus they have reduced themselves to the humiliating situation of being schismatics.

It is distressing to be under the necessity of preferring charges against brethren, but respect for private character, and regard to public good makes it an imperative, though painful duty. In answer to these complaints we say, that "indiscriminate denunciations, unaccompanied by any intelligible specifications" have not been brought against them. The charges were of the most definite nature. The errors and mal-practices were named and specified, and a large accumulation of proof adduced, as may be seen by consulting the libels which were found against them. We say too, that their complaint of "intrusions into peaceful congregations" is unfounded. It is no intrusion for a presbytery to see that a people under their presbyterial charge is not neglected, because a minister may have subjected himself to discipline. A people regarding the law of the house of God cannot submit to receive the ordinances of religion from the hands of a man under censure. They respect the decisions of church courts that are over them in the Lord. And it is the prerogative of a court to protect those that are under their care in such cases;

and to afford them the ministrations of religion. It is also the right of a christian people to obtain them from presbytery.

We say further, that their complaint of "confounding the power of superior and inferior judicatories" is causeless. A Synod has original jurisdiction in all cases within their bounds, and may call upon inferior courts, and command them to exercise particular acts of discipline. Did superior courts not possess original jurisdiction in such cases, it would sometimes happen, that censure, however deserved, would never be administered. If a session becomes remiss, the presbytery may, and sometimes does interfere. A presbytery also, may neglect its duty; all its permanent members may become heretical and disorderly. It is not to be supposed then, that the members of presbytery would censure one another. Then, it is the duty of Synod to interpose its authority; not by instructing such a presbytery to censure themselves, but to exercise discipline over them in virtue of original jurisdiction. When a presbytery becomes corrupt there is no way of reaching its members, but by bringing them before the bar of Synod. And so far is this from "confounding the power of superior and inferior judicatories," that it recognises their distinct character and power, one in subordination to another; and the inferior responsible to the superior, for the exercise of power. This general principle of presbyterial order, explains the case in hand. The presbytery of Philadelphia, consisting of four members, were all, with the exception of *one*, implicated in certain specific charges, and *that one* expressed his approbation of the malpractices of his fellow presbyters, on account of which they were charged. Against these, the Synod proceeded; the case did not admit of an alternative. Either the Synod must exercise their original jurisdiction in the case, or discipline must be given up. In the western presbytery, which consisted of five ministers, three were similarly implicated, and one of them Moderator of presbytery. Here, as in the former case, the presbytery could not be instructed to apply discipline, when a majority of them were to be the subjects of it. They *would* not do it; and they *could* not have been entrusted with it. In the northern presbytery, where there was only one member implicated, the process was conducted in the usual manner; the presbytery proceeded against him by libel. In all these cases, it will be seen that there has been no confounding of the powers of superior and inferior judicatories. Superior judicatories have only exercised their

own power of original jurisdiction over inferior courts, when the latter would not do their duty.

Again, it is complained of the northern presbytery, that it assumed "in a violent and disorderly manner, the powers of a session, as in the case of a commission to Argyle." Perhaps these complainers are not aware that there is nothing disorderly in a presbytery appointing a commission to inquire into the state of a congregation. Provision is made for this by the laws of the church. If the peculiar exigencies of a congregation demand it, the presbytery has the power of appointing a commission. It is often the only way by which evils can be met and overcome. An investigation made within the bounds of a congregation, of the causes of trouble, may elicit the true state of the case, when otherwise it might not be attained. Hence—"Parishes are visited by presbyteries, either occasionally, *pro re nata*, according to the weight of the emergent which doth require the visitation, or ordinarily and in course," &c. Stewart's Coll. Book I. Title 13. "By the petition of a Moderator of a congregation, or of the elders, or of a number of the members, a presbytery may institute a presbyterial visitation of a congregation, call individuals concerned before them, and reprove and rebuke irregularities and disorders, and promote the ends of truth and edification. And upon the same principle it is competent to the presbytery, by petition and complaint, or on the observation of open disorder and abuse, to correct evils in a congregational session, and to censure them, and call them authoritatively to the observation of scriptural order, and the rules of the church." "Book of Ecclesiastical government, &c. of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Scotland," pages 21, 22.

The case of Argyle was a crying one. The late pastor of the congregation, charged with having in concert with others published the rejected part of the pastoral address, and determined not to submit to presbytery, endeavours to organize a party, and thus distract the congregation. The remedy was a visitation, by the presbytery, or its commission. But, it is complained, that the commission, formed and urged "new and other terms of communion, besides those authorized by general Synod." Were this true, the commission would be blameworthy. But is it so? Men sometimes change their sentiments, and it is no uncommon thing for such, to be unwilling to acknowledge that they have changed them. Men may profess an adherence to the terms of communion authorized by the church, but by mental reservation understand them in a sense different from that in which they are pro-

posed. There may be strong evidence, that this is the fact, in a particular case. Has a court, we ask, not a right to ascertain, in such a case, whether it is so? A session, or presbytery, has unquestionably, the power to satisfy itself, when suspicion has been raised in any given case. Questions put in such cases, whether orally or by writing, to ascertain the opinions actually held, *are not* "new terms of communion." They are not terms either new or old. They are merely the means of learning whether a man's opinions coincide with the terms of communion or not. On the same ground, on which the Argyle commission is complained of, various heretics have complained of terms of communion themselves, and of confessions of faith. Lax men have thought the complaint just; and have *plausibly* said, the Bible is our terms of communion and confession of faith. The next thing which these men do, is to put their own meaning on the Bible. Hence, the necessity of confessions of faith, and terms of communion, to keep unprincipled men from corrupting the truth. For the same reason, it is sometimes necessary to guard terms of communion by investigation, as to the sense in which they are received. If the individuals in Argyle congregation, who complain of the commission of presbytery, hold no opinion different from that of the church—that expressed in her testimony, why are they alarmed because of a commission? Why do they complain of "new terms," when the commission wished only to ascertain their real sentiments respecting the terms of communion? And, if in certain points of very great importance, their opinions do not correspond with the terms of communion, why do they complain of the censures of the church? Members of a community are bound by the laws of the community, while they continue in it. Those who are not satisfied, may depart, but they have no right to complain, when these are applied to them.

Part of the "grave matter of complaint," in document No. 2, respects the "statement of recent transactions," by several members of the southern presbytery. This complaint is reiterated in another document, No. 16. Its character is said to be "falsehood in every sentence." It is remarkable, that with such an abundance of "falsehood," not one *could be* fixed upon! When unwelcome facts are related, it is much easier to denounce them at once as false, than to meet and repel them. The "statement of recent transactions," we know to be correct. We invite the memorialists to the scrutiny of it, article by article. It will stand the ordeal! The names by which it is subscribed, will, wherever the writers are known, be a guarantee for its correctness. Nor will their

character suffer any thing by being slandered by *such* men as these, who sign document, No. 16. To *know* the accusers will be a sufficient vindication of the accused! With this, we dismiss the "grave matter of complaint" as groundless—as the mere spleen of men, whom the discipline of the church has not permitted to go on in their evil courses.

"Document, No. 3." is the report of the committee to whom was referred document No. 2. In reviewing the latter we have had an opportunity of exposing its general unfairness. The report of the Committee to whom it was committed, contains a repetition of the same unjust complaints, in the form of resolutions. There are, however, two things in this document, which demand a passing notice.

"The specified reasons of said call, with the subsequent actings thereon, were a contravention of the orders of General Synod." Indeed! By what is this assertion proved? The proposal of "free discussion" warrants it not. While the General Synod of 1831 allowed free discussion, by this it did not allow its members to promulge every sentiment which they thought fit. If it did, the grossest heresies might, under this pretext, have been taught—even such as sap the very foundations of religion,—and an apology found in "free discussion." Members were not absolved from responsibility; they were liable to be called to an account for what they wrote under the "free discussion" resolution, as well as for what they taught from the pulpit. And, in view of this responsibility, the Editor of the "Expositor," to the pages of which it was to be confined, declared on the floor of Synod, that he would publish no article under the head of free discussion, unless the name of the writer were given. Free discussion was not allowed, on the ground that *every opinion* on civil relations might be held and taught with impunity, by the members of Synod. Some members said that their views on these questions were misunderstood. To meet this, Dr. Wylie proposed free discussion, as the means of coming to a mutual understanding. On this view it was acceded to. It is disingenuous, then, to plead the liberty of "free discussion," for the purpose of evading discipline. The use made of it was not the removing of mistakes and correcting false impressions; but the publishing of opinions at variance with the church's testimony. These brethren, then, have no right to exculpate themselves on the ground of "free discussion." Nor is there any ground for saying that "the orders of General Synod" were contravened. General Synod gave no permission to publish opinions and speculations at variance with the testimony of the church.

The second thing in Document 3d which claims attention, is, "That a vagum ministerium, together with all approaches towards it in the church, is greatly to be deprecated." The power of ordination belongs to a Presbytery. And although, in ordinary circumstances, it is conferred when a man is called to be the pastor of a particular congregation; yet, ordination and pastoral relation to some particular part of the church, are not inseparable, but are frequently disconnected. It was so with the first ministers of the gospel; and still it must be so in all cases where the gospel is first brought to a people. It is especially called for in many parts of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States: congregations and societies are scattered over an extensive surface of country. In these many ministerial duties are to be performed: often it is not convenient, nor even practicable, that settled ministers should leave their congregations, and attend to such claims. It becomes necessary then, so as to meet the wants of the church, to confer ordination on some who are not settled in any particular congregation. Is this wrong? Should men who are spending their strength, and some of them their property too, in thus preaching the gospel, and dispensing its ordinances from place to place, where the people of God are scattered, be reproached as "a vagum ministerium?" Some men "glory in their shame." And they reproach others for what is honourable and praiseworthy. Such men would, had they been living in the apostolical days, have branded Paul and Barnabas as "a vagum ministerium;" for they, too, like the humble individuals reproached in this "document," preached from place to place, without settled charges! Is a minister of Christ less responsible to his Presbytery, because he has not a pastoral charge? If not, why talk of an "irresponsible ministry?" The Reformed Presbyterian Church recognises not an "irresponsible ministry." The responsibility of her unsettled ministers is increased rather than lessened by the fact of their being so; as every one knows who is acquainted with ecclesiastical business.

The resolution respecting the "vagum ministerium" is calculated, and we doubt not was intended, to mislead. It was intended to impress the public with the conviction, that order had been violated on the part of the church. If ministers had been ordained without an urgent call, then might a charge of impropriety have been preferred, but not otherwise. Will it be said that there was no urgent call in the

cases referred to? * Let the *gentlemen* who framed the resolutions in Document 3d, ask the scattered congregations and societies throughout the Southern Presbytery, and the answer will vindicate that Presbytery from the charge of impropriety. Similar reasons, we presume, exist for the cases of ordination in the west, which have been specified: the call must have appeared urgent, at least, to the Western Synod, by whose orders, two of the three mentioned were ordained. The wiseacres of Eleventh-street, Philadelphia, have discovered that “a vagum ministerium is greatly to be deprecated.” To say nothing of Paul and Barnabas, and others of that age, who had not the honour of being bishops in *Philadelphia* or *Duanesburgh*, and therefore ought to be stigmatized as “a vagum ministerium”—to say nothing, we say, of these, the most eminent of the Reformers too will fall under this deprecation, as also the ejected ministers who were the means of preserving the testimony of Jesus in Britain, during the infamous reign of Charles the Second. †

Where Presbyteries ordain unsettled ministers, when there is no urgent call, or it may be no call at all, then there is just cause of complaint; but where has this been done? Not by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as complained of in Document 3d, but by the very men who make the complaint; when, as a faction in the church, they were endeavouring to break down her distinctive standing. The Presbytery of Philadelphia, when they had as many ministers as places of preaching within their bounds, ordained other two ministers, in 1831. This, we admit, was wrong. It was especially so, when we consider what the object was, which they had in view. This object was not to supply ministrations where they could not otherwise have been obtained; but to increase their number, and carry a measure in Synod. It had one good effect; it opened the eyes of some honest men, who might, but for this, have been hood-winked!

There is one use of the expression “vagum ministerium,” which we think correct; but which does not find its application in the conduct of those who are reproached in Docu-

* What these cases are, we are told in another part of the appendix of the pamphlet under review, p. 55.

† In England, Aug. 24, 1661, two thousand ministers were ejected, because they would not conform to the religion of the court.

In Scotland, on the 1st Oct. 1663, four hundred ministers were cast out of their congregations, because of their determined attachment to the Covenanted Reformation of Scotland. On the principle of the Eleventh-street resolution, the ministry of the ejected Non-conformists and Covenanters was to be deprecated as “a vagum ministerium!”

ment 3d, and in other parts of this pamphlet. It finds its application in the conduct of some of the leading men in the Eleventh-street junto, who, in the proper and literal acceptation of the phrase, are "a vagum ministerium." The Rev. S. W. Crawford, in 1830, left his congregation without leave or liberty; began to teach in the city of Philadelphia, at the distance of a hundred and fifty miles from it, although he still continued to be its minister till June, 1831. Where was order when such conduct was permitted? Let it be remembered that, among those who complain of "a vagum ministerium," the leaders are this same Mr. Crawford, who, upon a day's notice that a good school had been obtained for him, forsook his congregation, before his relation to it was dissolved,—and Dr. Wylie, the Presbytery, who winked at the disorderly conduct! In 1831, the Rev. J. N. McLeod left his congregation; and though the pastoral relation between him and it was not dissolved till the following summer, he continued at the distance of nearly two hundred miles, to prosecute his own private adventures! Yet he, and those of his brethren in Presbytery who winked at his doings, are among those who raise the cry of "vagum ministerium." In such cases as the above, we have the proper meaning of "a vagum ministerium." A consciousness of guilt, therefore, in this very thing, should have kept silent the men of Eleventh-street: they have *much* to lose, and *nothing* to gain, by these unjust insinuations. We remind them of the Saviour's advice, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."

"Document 6th" purports to be the "memorial of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation, Chamber-street, New-York." It is a mere reduplication of the many incorrect and improper statements given in "Document 2d," which has already been reviewed. A few individuals in the city of New-York, undertake to instruct the highest of *their own* acknowledged authorities, respecting subjects which these authorities have had repeatedly before them. Not forgetting the hated "pro re nata," "free discussion," nor even the "vagum ministerium," which, lest the brethren in Eleventh-street should not understand, they have been kind enough to translate into mother English! We leave this, as we mean not to imitate Dryden's hero—"and thrice he slew the slain."

"Document 7th" is "the petition of William Pattison, White Lake." Of this paper, unfounded as are the statements we would have taken no notice, had it not contained precise and specific charges; and as these charges are admitted to be true by the subsequent acting of the meeting. Our

newlight brethren generally make their charges in so vague and indefinite terms that they cannot be encountered. We are glad then for once to have an opportunity of meeting definite charges. The petitioner says "that he heard that the Sacrament was to be dispensed by Messrs. Chrystie and Scott, in the White Lake Congregation, for *which the session* had not petitioned, and which your petitioner believes the people did not expect." Why does this man trouble himself and the meeting in Eleventh-street, with the dispensation of the Lord's supper in a congregation to which he does not belong, and over which the meeting have no control? In the bounds of that congregation, not a man would recognize their authority. Suppose, it had not been asked, had the presbytery not power to attend to this, in one of their vacancies? But, the statement is untrue, the dispensation of the Lord's supper had been asked. The elders had requested a member of presbytery, to ask it in their name. And what aggravates the falsehood in this case, is, that the petitioner himself, besides acting along with his brother in the Eldership in making the request, came to that same member of presbytery and *urged* him to present their request. It is known to the petitioner too, that it was the unanimous desire of the congregation of White Lake.

"On the Monday succeeding, as your petitioner has been informed, in a session composed of William Stewart, of White Lake, and two others, Elders, brought for the purpose from Coldenham—Mr. David Scott being Moderator; your petitioner was by them suspended from the exercise of his office, without being present, or even knowing till two weeks after the transaction took place, any thing of the matter." Now, in no session held on Monday or on any other day was the petitioner suspended. Nor, is he *yet* suspended, unless it has been done by his newlight friends, who we fear have suspended him from the exercise of the virtue of veracity. The case is this, the petitioner had in the month of April last associated with the faction who withdrew from the Eastern Sub-synod, and offering himself as the representative of White Lake Congregation, sat in their meetings. And this he did without any appointment from the congregation—with the perfect knowledge that another was appointed and certified by session. This improper conduct called for investigation; the session, consisting of one elder besides the petitioner, could not act in the case. Presbytery appointed the Rev. Messrs. Chrystie and Scott, to dispense the Lord's supper in the congregation; to these ministers, presbytery added two elders belonging to the nearest congregation, as a

commission of presbytery to attend to the petitioner's business. The commission, along with the remaining elder of the congregation, held a meeting (not on Monday, but) on the Friday preceding. The petitioner however, was neither *tried* nor *suspended*; a resolution was passed simply prohibiting Mr. Pattison from taking any concern in the government of the congregation, till he had given satisfaction. Could less have been done? Was it either oppressive or disorderly? When the meeting of Eleventh-street, condemn as tyrannical and disorderly this precautionary act, how have they overlooked—nay, how have they approved of, suspending from the privileges of the church upwards of one hundred individuals in the city of New-York, not, for any thing these had themselves done, but only as adherents to others who where charged with the *enormous sin* of obeying Synod! “The legs of the lame are not equal.”

“Document 13th, “contains certain resolutions of the meeting in Eleventh-street, respecting the resolutions of the Southern Presbytery, relating to the A. C. Expositor.

“Resolved 1. That the interference of this presbytery was uncalled for.” The Southern Presbytery thought otherwise. And as a constituent part of the church, they had a right to express their opinion of the character and tendency of the Expositor: the urgency of the case too, demanded it. The authorized organ of General Synod had violated the principles on which it was appointed; and had become the vehicle of slander and error. General Synod was not to meet till the following year; was an inferior court, during the interval to permit this vehicle of slander and misrepresentation to be continued without warning those under their charge of its dangerous tendency? Common sense revolts at the proposal. The Southern Presbytery passed no judicial act respecting the Expositor, they merely expressed their opinion of its character, so as to guard the people under their charge from being imposed on. By this, they usurped no prerogative of General Synod: they did only, what every member of the church has a right to do—express their opinion. Is not a similar course followed in numberless instances in political affairs? Do not small meetings of citizens express by resolutions their opinions, sometimes approving, at other times disapproving of, the conduct of the highest functionaries of the land? By doing so, do these meetings usurp the power of the general government? And, in church business are not the people of Philadelphia familiar with such actings. Has not the Consistory of Eleventh-street, more than once sat in “solemn conclave” and condemned

the judicial actings of Synods and Presbyteries? But, all men have not consistency!

“Resolved, 4. That it was cruel and unjust in pronouncing a sentence of condemnation, without trial, without specifications or allowing the accused a hearing, or the opportunity of defence.” This resolution is calculated to make a very erroneous impression, where the *truth* is not known. It asserts that the accused was not allowed a hearing. The fact is, *no one* was “accused.” The editor of the *Expositor* was present, but he was not charged. He was left in the hands of General Synod, to whom he was responsible for the execution of his task; and to whom the Southern Presbytery resolved to carry a complaint on the subject. In the mean time, they warned the members of the church under their care, of the pernicious character of the work. Was this wrong?

“Document 14th” is a report of a committee on the documents already reviewed, and some other papers. It contains therefore, only, a repetition in the shape of resolutions of the same unkind and unjust accusations, which have been exposed when considering those “documents,” not even omitting the dreaded *vagum ministerium*.”

“Document 16th is a “complaint of the session” of which Mr. J. N. McLeod is Moderator, in New-York. No. 17. Is a string of resolutions, founded on No. 16, by a committee to whom it was referred. We have no inclination to follow these documents in all their meanderings. They contain a great deal of almost every thing but truth. This, it must be admitted is not very abundant. And, perhaps we ought not to be surprised at this? As, we have no heart to follow documents, in the examination of which it would be necessary to use language which, though just, would be severe; severe, approaching almost to harshness: and without this these documents cannot be exposed; therefore, we prefer another course; namely, we shall relate as briefly as possible the facts of the case, from which it will be seen that the writers of Document 16th, and those acting with them, have uniformly been the aggressors; that the congregation to which they *formerly* belonged, have only endeavoured to defend themselves, against a series of violent and oppressive acts: acts, unheard of before, in the Reformed Presbyterian church. And, that the church courts which shielded them from the vengeance of Mr. McLeod and his party did, only, what they were in duty bound.

There is a number of misrepresentations respecting the Southern Presbytery, met in January 1833, which before we

proceed to make our statement of facts we shall correct. "On the 29th of December 1829* a summons was addressed to Dr. McLeod, ordering him to appear at a *pro re nata* meeting of the Southern Presbytery to be held on the 16th of January, and which was called for the purpose of trying himself and session for exercising discipline on the members of their own congregation." For, the false and malicious assertion which this quotation contains, there is not even the shadow of an excuse. Dr. McLeod never was summoned to trial, for either one thing or other. And, what is more, he *never* was tried by the Southern Presbytery. The writers of document 16th, know this too; so that they are without excuse. On the 29th of December 1832, a citation was addressed to Dr. McLeod, by the Moderator to attend a meeting of the presbytery on the 16th of January 1833. Is a citation to attend presbytery a summons to trial? Then all the other members were summoned to stand trial as well as Dr. McLeod. "The Moderator" it is said "assumes to himself the power of calling a court, sending a citation, bringing a libel, trying, finding guilty, and passing sentence all in one breath, and before the court meets at all." The Moderator did not need to assume "the power of calling the court" nor of "sending citations" the church has vested the power of both, in the Moderator: to him alone, this power belongs. As to the "trying," "finding guilty" and "passing sentence" there is not, and never was any thing. The citation specifies a number of things, to take order on which, the Southern Presbytery were called together. The Moderator knew that it was necessary to specify the items of business to come before the court, he does so, and nothing more. And, if he had not done, precisely what he has done, the meeting of presbytery would have been justly chargeable with irregularity.†

The shortest and most satisfactory answer that can be given to the exceedingly incorrect assertions and expressions of opinion made in "document 16th," and the equally incorrect report and resolutions contained in No. 17, is as we have formerly said to give the facts of the case. Those, who now constitute the congregation of Chamber-street, are not the men who have troubled that congregation. They have uniformly acted a deliberate and cautious part. For years they had suffered aggressions, and that too, with scarcely a

* 1832 we presume is meant.

† See, the citation itself, as published in the "statement of recent transactions by several ministers of the Southern Presbytery." pp. 14, 15.

murmur ; their recourse to active measures of defence was forced upon them by unavoidable necessity.

The harmony of the congregation of Chamber-street, was interrupted by an effort made several years ago, to obtrude Mr. J. N. McLeod on it, either as co-junct pastor with his father, or as pastor of a part of it, to be separated for this purpose. In prospect of accomplishing one or other of these objects, a place of worship was procured in Sixth-street. The greater part of the congregation were opposed to these movements. As they ought, and as they might have foreseen, the friends of Mr. McLeod failed to fix him in Sixth-street: the people were not prepared to admit the claim of hereditary right of succession in the church, and they were not quick sighted enough to see any other claim possessed by this candidate. They chose another, whom they thought better adapted to their wants. Having obtained a settlement in Galway, Mr. McLeod did not long remain there; in December, 1831, he returned to the city of New-York, to become again the means of disturbing the peace of Chamber-street congregation. During winter he preached in his father's pulpit; with what acceptance it is unnecessary now to say. In April 1832, Synod was led to appoint Mr. McLeod a supply for his father's pulpit for three months. This was obtained under the false pretence, that it was the desire of Chamber-street session that he should be the supply; when in fact the session had not made any such request: it was the private management of two or three of the elders. The appointment was made in Synod by a resolution introduced by Dr. Mc Master. Before making the resolution, the Dr. begged that no one should make any objections, but allow it to be carried without remarks. The Synod acted in the case under the apprehension that it was the desire of the session and congregation of Chamber-street. Thus Mr. McLeod was saddled as stated supply on a congregation, the major part of which did not esteem his services; but thought that he would have been better employed in attending to his own congregation. As it appeared afterward this appointment was designed to open the way for settling Mr. McLeod in the congregation of Chamber-street permanently. To obtain a "consummation, so devoutly to be wished for" by Mr. McLeod's friends; his father-in-law, Dr. Wylie, visited the city of New-York early in the summer of 1832; had a private interview with such influential members of the congregation as it was deemed prudent to admit into the secret of the proposed measure. They were told that something must be done for Mr. McLeod; that unless he were called to the congregation

and admitted to the joint charge of it with his father, he must leave them. Of this, the generality of the people knew nothing. Here however, it is presumed, the matter was determined—Mr. McLeod must be his father's colleague. In the month of September this plan began to assume a more tangible form; having been partly discussed in session and consistory, it was broached in a congregational meeting called for that purpose. Many of the best members of the congregation present, were opposed to it, but the voice of reason was drowned in the noise of faction. Those opposed to the McLeod party, begged that they would not rashly proceed with a measure which was evidently fraught with mischief; and at least that they should not proceed till the congregation were generally made acquainted with it; and have time to reflect upon a matter of such importance. Even this reasonable request would not be agreed to. On putting the question of postponement, it was found that the McLeod party had a small majority of the members present. This majority had been obtained by the violation of a uniform practice in the church. Contrary to all former practice or precedent in this country, the chairman of the meeting pronounced that female members otherwise represented should be admitted to vote. Aware of what was coming, the McLeod party had mustered all their female adherents in the congregation, and thus the resolution was carried! The colleague question, according to the resolution, was to be tried on the following week. The night appointed arrived; but, by this time the congregation was awakened to the imposition that was about to be practised on them; they flocked in numbers to the meeting. This was perceived by the McLeod party, who now had recourse to another stratagem to gain time; and so prepare another plan of operation. The same men, who in the preceding week would admit of no delay, now, seeing that they would be baffled in their scheme, urged that the consideration of the colleague question should be put off. Nay, they even went so far, as to propose that the time of the meeting should be employed in prayer. The congregation however, were not to be diverted by this proposal. And, to say the least, it was an abuse of a sacred ordinance, which taking all the circumstances into view, deserved the reprobation of every good man. The business however was proceeded in. And by a considerable majority the congregation declared *against* a colleague to their pastor. They resolved that the session be required to obtain supplies from the presbytery during the inability of their pastor, whom they were still willing to support, though unable to minister among them; as also the ad-

ditional expense incurred by such supplies. But, although a promise was given, that the presbytery should be asked to supply the pulpit of Chamber-street, the promise was never fulfilled.

What the McLeod party could not gain by fair, they were determined to gain by other means. In the month of November an opportunity occurred of furthering their design. At a meeting of the Eastern Sub-synod, Mr. J. N. McLeod was suspended from the exercise of his office, for contempt of court. Supported by a faction he was resolved to brave the authority of Synod. And on the following Sabbath in disregard of the act of suspension, he preached, and performed other ministerial acts. To this, the lovers of order in the congregation would not submit. They would not submit to have the ministrations of a suspended minister thrust upon them, by a domineering faction: as worship was about to be commenced, they rose *quietly* from their seats and left the place of worship.* During the succeeding week, from all the prayer-meetings which met in any of the houses of the McLeod party, the other members of the congregation were excluded. They were compelled to depart. And this was only the commencement of successive and continued acts of oppression. Among those who withdrew from the ministrations of Mr. McLeod while suspended, were several elders. And because they did so, they themselves, and all who adhered to them, namely, all who disapproved of countenancing the ministrations of a suspended minister, were excluded by a formal act of session, from the privileges of the church. And that too, immediately preceding the dispensation of the Lord's supper. By this one act, a large majority of the congregation were deprived of their rights as members!

Several members of consistory, and one of session, had ceased to be office-bearers in Chamber-street congregation, in consequence of having been absent from it for some considerable time. One of the deacons and his family, had been for nearly two years in a distant part of the church; the other two and the member of session, had attached themselves to Sixth-street congregation, and ceased to act in the session or consistory of Chamber-street. On the return of these to the latter congregation, the seat of the elder in session, and those of the deacons, and the elder in consistory, was questioned on the

* That, they withdrew with the utmost decorum from the place of worship, appeared subsequently in testimony on oath before the Southern Presbytery; on this point, several witnesses bore testimony.

obvious principle, that an office-bearer leaving a congregation cannot act as an office-bearer, without a re-election of the people over whom he is to bear rule. The persons whose seats were questioned, were nevertheless admitted to act as officers. Through the management of the Moderator, this was carried; from the chair he pronounced that the persons whose right of acting was questioned, even when the question of right was trying, were entitled to a vote. Thus one disorderly act, was made the means of justifying a similar one! Four members of consistory, two elders and two deacons, because they disputed Mr. Gifford's right to act as an elder, and refused to receive the ministrations of a suspended minister, were charged before session, and appeared to answer to the charge. And because they would not suffer themselves to be tried by a session, the Moderator's chair of which was occupied by a minister under suspension, they were thrown out of the church, under the pretence of having declined the authority of session. This, however, they had not done; they acknowledged the authority of the elders; as for the man who occupied the Moderator's place, they were not bound to acknowledge him. He was disqualified by suspension. It was cruel to urge them to be tried by a man who was not their minister; to whom they had never promised obedience in the Lord; and who was legally unfitted to moderate or even sit in any court of Christ. The cruelty was increased further, from the consideration, that part of the charge brought against them, was their refusing to submit to Mr. McLeod's ministrations while under suspension. They could not have submitted to trial, while Mr. McLeod was in the chair, without a recognition of his official standing, which they *could* not be expected to do. Their own pastor was present in session. To him they professed subjection in the Lord, and declared their readiness to go to trial, were he to moderate the session, which they entreated him to do. But in vain. Their expulsion was determined on.

The session and consistory were now purged of such as could not be entrusted with the movements of the McLeod party. Secretly the session applied to the presbytery of Philadelphia, to take the congregation under its care, and to grant them the moderation of a call. It is unnecessary to say that this was disorderly. Every one who knows any thing of church law, knows that a congregation cannot transfer itself from one presbytery to another; nor that other receive it. The transfer of congregations from one presbytery to another, belongs to Synod. But of the attempt in this case, to transfer the congregation of Chamber-street, from

the southern to that of the Philadelphia presbytery; nor of the intended moderation, did the congregation know. It was a private, underhand transaction, of the leaders of the McLeod party. For the first, the congregation were informed on Sabbath evening, from the pulpit, that the moderation of a call would take place next day. Accordingly on the morning of the following day, a commission from the presbytery of Philadelphia appeared in church, and one of them moderated in a call. The majority of the congregation were prevented from voting; such only were called upon as were understood to belong to the party. By various pretences they were excluded; though the real cause was, they would not consent to have Mr. J. N. McLeod for their minister. Being moderated in violation of the rights of a majority of the congregation, the call was presented to, and accepted by Mr. McLeod immediately after the farce of a mock election had taken place; and forthwith, he was installed. Thus in a short winter morning, a call is moderated—all the intermediate steps carried through, not even excepting the installation and *settlement* of the *incumbent*, which, according to the laws of the church, should have occupied at *least* the period of three weeks, to make the necessary intimations of the different steps of procedure. In vain did aged and respectable elders and members of the congregation expostulate against such shameful conduct. For attempting to prevent it, some of them were dragged to the police office, and compelled to give security to a large amount. Constables had been provided early in the morning, before the congregation met, to awe them into silence, and keep them from opposing the unholy work, which was to be transacted. What had these brethren done, that they should be carried to the police office? They had violated no law of the church?—they were not peace-breakers; they had not violated the good order of society—but “the head and front of their offending” was, that they would not allow a crafty and tyrannical minority to force a pastor upon them, whose services they wished not.

Among other things, the minority boasted that the church property belonged to them, and that it ought to be appropriated to their use, to the exclusion of the majority. In point of fact, the congregation was refused admission to the church, to hold their annual and other meetings. It was understood that the property would be put to sale, and the congregation excluded from the proceeds. What could be done in such circumstances? The McLeod party had by management, (though in defiance of all ecclesiastical order,) succeeded in clearing the session and consistory of such as

would not go with them. And in an equally disorderly manner, with the aid of a presbytery who had no authority in the case, a man was about to be forced on them by the dread of the constable's staff. The McLeod party had previously set the Synod, and now the presbytery at defiance. The congregation had then no alternative left; they must either suffer themselves to be wronged out of their church property, as they had been of their church privileges, or take the painful step of claiming in a court of law their property. To this they have been driven by the sheer necessity of the case; it has been forced upon them by the violent and unbrotherly conduct of the McLeod party. For seeking redress in a court of law, as far as property is concerned, the congregation, and particularly some individuals of it, have been slandered and reproached. The charge of misrepresentation and falsehood has been laid against them; and even perjury has been insinuated. A printed letter has been circulated by the McLeod party, we say not with what design, but which is assuredly calculated to make such impressions.

Certain individuals in the name and in behalf of the congregation, complained to the Court of Chancery. In their complaint, they state that the act of incorporation under which the congregational property was held "was procured by the said Alexander McLeod, without having previously submitted its provisions, object, or operations, either to the people or to the elders and deacons of the said church in their consistorial capacity, and that, although some individuals may have known, or been informed, that it was in contemplation to procure an act of incorporation, it was not generally known nor talked of, nor was the nature, or the effect of the contemplated act discussed, submitted, or assented to, by either the people or the elders and deacons in their consistorial character, &c." In the printed letter referred to, "extracts from the minutes of consistory" are given, which prove that the complainers were at meetings, when reference was made in various ways to the existence of an act of incorporation. This, is held up as evidence, that, the complainers were acquainted with it, and therefore their complaint is *false*! This would have been a fair conclusion had the complainers said they knew not of the existence of *an act* of incorporation: but, this they have *not* said. They have said, that the act of incorporation "was procured, without having submitted its provisions, object, or operations, &c." And that it was not "assented to, by either the people or the elders and deacons in their consistorial character."

The truth of the complaint made to the Chancellor is

then unimpugned. If the "provisions," &c. of the act of incorporation, were ever submitted to either the congregation or Consistory for approval, let the minute which engrosses this, whether of a congregational meeting or of the Consistory, be produced. The producing of such a minute would bring home the charge; nothing else can. The McLeod party have the papers in *their own* hands; let them, then, produce the testimony which we ask. If they do not, it is because they *cannot*. The truth of the statements made in the "bill of complaints" is undeniable; and, therefore, the affidavits of the two deacons, who swore to its contents, are unimpeachable.

The congregation of Chamber-street have, throughout, been the injured party, while the minority have been the aggressors. If the majority could at all be blamed, it could only be because they had *so long* and *so patiently* endured a continued series of gross impositions. The preceding is only a brief outline of the treatment which the congregation of Chamber-street has received from a violent faction, who, regardless of the claims of the congregation, have pursued their own sinister objects. The knowledge of the preceding facts is the best refutation of the calumnies contained in "Document 16th," and of the folly of the meeting in Eleventh-street, Philadelphia, in approving of it, as they have done in "Document 17th."

In "Document 18th," Mr. Walkinshaw is misrepresented. He had a right to leave the Philadelphia Presbytery, and go to the Southern; he was entitled to a regular dismissal. And no envious act of Mr. J. N. McLeod could affect his standing. His greatest *sin* was, having preached the gospel to a people, who would not, and who could not, submit to hear it preached by Mr. McLeod while under suspension.

A specimen of the veracity of "Document 18th" may be seen, as far as Mr. McKinney is concerned, by comparing the following quotation from it, "That this court" (Philadelphia) "know nothing of Mr. McKinney as a regular student of Theology," with an extract from the report of the same Presbytery of Philadelphia to General Synod, 1831—"The students under their care are Samuel McKinney and Hugh Walkinshaw."*

In the preceding review, our principal object has been to expose falsehood and misrepresentation: the aberrations of the new-lights, as it respects principles, it was unnecessary to discuss; although their minutes and documents might

* American Christian Expositor, vol. I. p. 271.

have afforded abundant opportunity. Therefore, we do not deem it needful to examine "Document 19th." The proposed alterations on "the draught of a covenant," which it contains, are not likely to increase the value of the draught. "The confession of faith," and the "faithful contendings of the confessors of the Redeemer," are removed from the bond to the preamble. This may probably be intended as a decent kind of burial to confessions of faith, &c. if not to covenanting itself!

Our new-light brethren have acted inconsistently with their own "proposed plan of harmony," when they chose to fall away; why do they strive to perpetuate strife, by the publication of such things as their extracts and minutes?

We have little hope of gaining our offending brethren, by an exposure of their false statements; but we have a regard to the integrity of our own character as a distinct part of the household of faith. We have some regard to the opinion which may be formed of us, in the world generally. We seek the good opinion of those that are without, as far as we can consistently with truth. We have some regard, too, to the opinion which other parts of the church of Christ may have of us. Especially we are anxious lest we be misrepresented to our brethren in other and distant countries. We cannot think of the injury done to the cause of truth during the second persecution in Scotland, by the misrepresentations that were given of the confessors and martyrs, by the indulged, to the brethren in foreign countries, and to foreign churches, without thinking, at the same time, that the truth is in similar danger at the present moment. The means which have been employed to misrepresent us, may succeed for a little while, both at home and abroad; but when the present excitement wears off, justice will be rendered to the integrity of our procedure, even by those who may disapprove of our peculiar principles—then will be awarded to us the meed of honesty.

THE END.

